

[The Good Cobbler]

Conn.1938-9 THE GOOD COBBLER As told to Merton R. Lovett - "De good cobble he is & necessity.... de good shoes ofto -times increases dejoy in de heart."

1

Page 1 3 [Interview 10?] INTERVIEW WITH VITO CACCIOLA BY Merton R. LovettFrom Memory

" I have indeed got naturalized. I showa you de paper. [?]

"When I geta de paper I feel proud. I say myself - this a my United States. I feel in my heart love for dis country. I say all men are free and have equality. I good as de next man. I hava chance to be rich, to be politico perhaps. metime I get disapoint. " De constitution all right, but too many peoples unregard it. Dis country now is runa by crookers and gangsters. De make of de constitution a bigga joke. " De laws is for de rich and de sinful men. me more lika me live de pure life. What it getta them? What's de matter? What's de matter? [?] " You say , Mr. Lovett, that de peoples is to blame? De should vota for honest men? De should reforce de laws, putta teeth in them? De law hava teeth all right, but its like dog, sick with de [crasiness?], it bitta 2 de wrong peoples. Looka me. I playa de music good. In de night, when I no sleep, I playa de guitar. Do I playa jazz? Do I maka noise lika cook pans in de kitchen? Do I playa [fortissimo?]? No! I play fter and sweeter. I play de fine music. I play lika de artist. And whata you tink? De policamen he say, 'Stopa! Stopa! you maka distrubance of de peace.' All de time de radio in de saloon maka noise twice big. Is dere equality in dat ? Mr. Lovett? [?] " No, I thinka metime no country in the world corrupted as dis one. Everyday you read in de paper dat meone maka de steal and de graft. And do de lawyers put dem in de prins? Not you live. " Possibil. Possibil. Maybe de newspapers does exgratudate - exag erate - de wickedness. But if there was not many crookers the papers woulda not have many sins to printa.

Library of Congress

Muslini? He fixa de grafters. If de Italian Mayor spoils his trust. Poof! Muslini 3 maka new mayor quick. If de judge graba de bribe; he's pusha in prin and Muslini slama de door. When Muslini catcha de gangster, he begin saya his prayers. Look at Muslini. [?] "What maka you say, would I lika live in Sicily me more? I never go back, I American now. De relatives is mosta all dead. Sure dis country de best, but he's not good as I hoped. But I would no (or whatever he would say to mean "But I would not")]

Perhaps what you say, absence makes de heart grow fonder of. Looka it de snow. Hes colda and darka. In Sicily de sun make you needa no coat. Its nicer den snow when de flowers make white de lemon trees. I wisha you could see it. [?]

No, I don't thinka de Italians is richer [?] de peoples in de United States. Dis country hava much wealth. It hava more shops and machines to maka things. "De trouble is dat de wealth is a not fairly redistributed. Too many peoples is too poor. me peoples is too rich. one [?] "You are a smarta man and educated, Mr. Lovett. You is poor. I is gooda man all my life. I is poor. De crookers and de gangsters is rich. "I think me day we may needa de revolution. If me men / got much greed, de keepa all money and no give de good peoples a chance, what we goina do?" Interview with Vito Cacciola BY Merton R. Lovett

. . . (from memory) "Yes, Mr. Lovell, I know I hava de unusual vocabulary. I tella you why I am acquaint-ed with many words. "When I reada de paper, all de words what I does not know[,?] I marka with pencil. Lika this. See. Then before I sleepa sleep I dicover them in de the dictionary. one [?] "My greatest handicap is de pronounciation. When I talka, peoples de not mistaka me for American. What can I do, Mr. Lovett? "You say that I maka but few mistakes. What is they?

"it is de emphasis you call it, which I puta on de wrong syllable syllable ? When de words enda with ED, I should not put de accent there? [?] "Do I say hop-ed? What should I saya? Hoped. Hoped. I will trya to remember. "And it is not nam-ed? It is named. Named. Named. It is easy for me to forget. "And I, I ends words with A, which is de mistake. It

Library of Congress

should be I play de violin and not I playa de violin. I have mucha difficulty. Excusa me. O.K. I will saya excuse me. “ Why do you laugh? Oh! Then I must say, say excuse me. Alas I have much difficulty. I will trya to do. Hah! Hah! I will try to do. [?] run on

2

“Nobody ever help-ed, helped, me Mr. Lovett. If you will teacha - teach-ed me. All right, If you will teach me, I will be be grateful. I will writa - write - it in my red book.

[.?] Interview with Vito Cacciola - Paper No. 19 BY Merton R. Lovett

[?]“As well as remembered”[?] “ I'm a glad you teacha de Italian in de school. Tis a nica language. Everybodys would get mucha pleasure from de Italian. [?] “ I hopa de teacher no teaches de dialect. [?] In Italy there is many dialects. With great hardness can the man from Sicily talk with the peoples of Genoa. Those peoples maka many of de words bad. But there is only one true Italian. He is spoke in Roma. Muslini teacha it now in all de schools. “ De man of music lova de Italian. It is de besta language for singer. Why for Caru sing de Italian? He's sweeta language. He's de language of music. “ Did you ever hear de great opera like “Ell Trovatore’ in de English ? Mr. Lovett? No! Nor you ever will. De English, when you singa it, unda like de quacka of ducks. De Italina, Ah, he reminda you of de singing of birds. [?] “ Yes, I thinka the English a most difficult language. Often it maka me confus-ed. I talka it almost like de American. metimes I get mix-ed up. Look what I finda in my little red book. ‘Adore,’ what you tink dat means? “ You're mistake. You don't slama adore. See here, ‘adore’ means to offer worship. I [etta?] fool too. I ama ‘ass’ in de English, but I cannot eata grass and slapa de flies with my tail. “Mucha Much mistakes I make. Believe you me, I never ‘lie,’ buta you ‘lie’ in de bed, Mr. Lovett. [?] [De?] little book say: “last” meana mean on de the end, lika de the Amen or de prayer. But de the cobbler hava first his “last”, befor he can lasta his firsta shoe. By jingo, English is harda hard language to teach-ed. De Italian, it meana what it says.

. . . . Interview with Vito Cacciola by Merton R. Lovett

Library of Congress

[. . .?] [?] [Interview?] 48 (from memory)

"I have hada no work this morning. Mr. Lovett. I cleana up de shop. I washa me clothes. One time I visit de garage and chewa me de rag. " Oh, it coulda be worse. I do not bellyache. I gota got still plenty to eat. Just now I am cooka cook me veal. Does it not smella delicious?

"Envy is like de cancer. It destroya de happiness. me people are most foolish.]

["?]Tell me what it saya on this coin.

["?] that is it. All for one. One for all. it should be in this great country. Everybodys should helpa help each other. There should be more perfect cooperation. Why should me hava great riches and many liva with poverty? " Yes, the law of Jesus would bringa peace and happiness. Now everyones must fighta fight each other for jobs and for de the necessities of life. The strong and de the smart peoples eata eat de the weak lika canibals. " I think that peoples acta like dogs and not lika brothers. Did you not see de dogs fighta for bone? They maka growls. They graba it from each other. They seiza it and run till they is catched. Finally de the biggest dog eata it up. "Yes, I think that is de good example too. Al de rich peoples hava too much pride. They boasta. They maka make poor peoples envious, when they driva de the big autos and weara too precious clothes.

2

" Sure, they maka disharmony. metimes it is dangerous. Did you reada about de rich man in New York? That man's wife weara jewels worth \$100,000 to de party. He is proud, but he excita envy in many peoples. In de night gangsters breaka in his house. They aska him, where is de jewels? He does not tella them at first, what does they do? They burna his feet. Oh, it is terrible! He screama, but bye and bye he losa his courage. He saya to hisself,[-?] "My life it is worth more than jewels ". . " He giva them to de thief. " Sure, it was his mistake to showa much wealth in public. Pride and greed costa too much. " What

Library of Congress

would I do if I had a million dollars? My jingo, Mr. Lovett, I cannot dream of much money. " Well, [?] if I was a rich man, I would not spend it for great luxury. What good would it do for Vito, if he had many autos? The mansion with many rooms, I would not enjoy. "Yes. I would buy a good piano. Perhaps I would get a big organ, the same like I once played in Sicily. Music gives me much pleasure. I would share it with others. Many of the poor musicians I would help. " First I would help my brother Peter. My mother and the relatives in Italy. I would make them comfortable and happy. " And I would get educated. By jingo, I would learn how to talk good as American. When I had learned, I mean learned, I would be the missionary. The money I would spend to bring knowledge of good living to others. Like Jesus preached, I would give to the poor. From their hearts I would lift a worry and sin. " I am glad you agree with me, Mr. Lovett. [?] But it is foolishness to dream. The cobbler must be satisfied with riches in the mind and heart. [?] " Meet my Sister by the law, Marie. " This is Mr. Lovett of whom I tell you. " It is most pleasant to get such a lovely cake. With the veal which I cooked I will eat dinner like the President. " [Marie?] is kind like an angel, Mr. Lovett. Often she cooks for me delicious food. sometimes she iron my clothes. [?] " No, my jingo, I would be no better, if I had the wife. I am the good housekeeper. Is it not Marie? " My! My! My! You are joking Marie. You can find no dirt in my bedroom. It is neat as a pin. " She is very fine woman, Mr. Lovett. the evening you must visit my brother Peter's house. My niece, Angela, will play for you the piano. " Here are shoes for your daughter, Mary. They are fixed. Will you take them? " you have not yet got your check? Take them just the same. They do me no good on the shelf. " We are friends. I trust you with pleasure. " All right then, I hope you get the check on." Interview with Vito Cacciola By Merton R. Lovett (from memory) " No, Mr. Lovett business does not get any better. Since Easter I find little to do. Most often I must work for nothing. Al, I give much credit. See, here is list of moneys owed me. sometimes I fix shoes for nothing.

"You are right. Free work is not good for business. But charity is a good for the soul. It pays much in happiness. [?] " Last week a poor woman brought in to me one shoe. The heel was twisted out of shape. It caused her to limp. " She says to me, "Vito, I must go

Library of Congress

Thursday to Providence, where my sister geta buried. For shame I cannot wear this shoe. Can you fixa it for a little money? More I cannot pay.”

“Yes, she tella tell de the truth. Her family starva starve on W.P.A., with fourteen dollars each week.

“Twenty-five cents was de price I maka for her. It was very reanable. I must taka off de heel and builda a new one from bottom up. It requires half of an hour. Besides, I maka that shoe brilliant with polish. [?] “De woman coma for shoe in evening. She was mucha pleased. She saya, “Vito, it isa fine, but it looka good, de other shoe will seema by comparin to look shabby.’ ’ [run on?]

2

“ Then she weepa weep, and tella tell me she has no more money. “ No, Mr. Lovett, I does not always have such effect on womens. They do not always crya when they visit me. Most often I giva them courage. Often I maka them smile. “ Sure, I fixa fix de the second shoe and for nothing. I ama am certain it was de the good deed. [?] “ But times are most difficult. Everybody isa worried. Peoples have little money and mucha fear. They forgeta trust in de good Lord. Next day another woman sheda tears in de shop al. “ She was de widow with five childrens. I meeta her on de street. Quickly I seea that she walka with pain. She stepa like she walka on hot stove, lika this. “ I ask-ed her, “Mrs. Biodini, what is de matter? Does you walka from rheumatism?” “ She answer, ‘No, it is de shoe that maka trouble.’

My, my. Mr. Lovett. De shoe has mucha much hole and little le. She walka walk on de the ground. I warna warn her that she will be hurt-ed by nail or geta sickness. “ Sure, she al hava no money to geta de the shoes fix-ed. I aska her to come to de the shop. I promise to fixa fix them without cost.

3

[?] “ Oh, no, she was not beautiful. She was old. When de shoes is done, she cannot reacha down to puta them on. She is mucha lame. “Yes, I puta them on and tie-ed de laces. Then she weep-ed al. “Whata you think she saya? She says, “You is de good man, Vito.’ I felta great joy. Does you never hava such [reesperience?], Mr. Lovett?”

De man who just goa go out has for years been de the drunka. If you had beena absent, he woulda ask-ed me for money. “ I knowa that, because he has ask-ed me many times before. Often I have urg-ed him to cuta out whiskey. It does no gooda yet. “ No, I would not giva him money to-day. ‘Vito,’ he would saya, ‘my baby she is sick. Will you giva me dollar for medicine?’ “ I knowa he lies. Several times I paya him. Always he drinka de money. [?] “Can such a man be reform-ed? Yes, many times. Often de Lord maka miracle. It is worth de trya. [?]

4

“ I tella such peoples that God will helpa them, but until they showa de good heart, I will not giva them money. Let de friends who drinka with them doa that. “ I have seen several bad men repent-ed. Often they maka de best Christians afterwards. “Why? Well, I thinka their sad resperience maka them wise. They knowa de suffering and punishments for sin. They al recogniza de temptations, even when they is disguised and looka beautiful. And de repent-ed sinner hava more patience and kindness in his heart. He knowa how stronger de devil is. “Yes, many good mens were once wick-ed. me of them becoma de best preachers and priests. They knowa well de weakness of mens and de goodness of God. [?] “ Sure, I hava beena de sinner. I am metimes de sinner now. I must often pray for help and must fighta temptation with enthusiasm.” “ But I discover-ed the powers of prayer and de goodness of God in de Methodist church. Does you beliva me, Mr. Lovett? I became a chang-ed man in one day. I was what you calla born once more. [Interview 24?] “ No, I hada been mucha sinful. Yes, I had twenty-four bada habits. They prevent-ed me from knowledge of de grace of God. “ When my eyes wasa open-ed, I maka end of those bad habits. It was in 1926. “ Sure, thanks to de blessed Lord, I losa them all. My heart is

Library of Congress

a purified. I am a greatly happy. "You is right. It is harda to live good life. You must hava de strong will. I hava it. You must praya much for help. I geta it. " Why, Mr. Lovett, I do not thinka you has more than twenty-four de bad habits. You al can geta new heart. You must first trusta in God. You must talka to Him often. You must hava de will of iron. " Well, you can exercise de will. If you wisha hard you can changa yourself. " Does I thinka there is hope for everybodys? De grace of God and de love of Jesus is mucha great. [?] I tella you story.

"There was a policeman. He was nam-ed Curry, Does you remember him? "That's a right, Jim Curry. He was bada egg. He does mondey work. In de stores he getta bribe. One night you remember 4 he was drunk, and maka smash-up down by bridge. Then he getta fired. [?] "Yes, he goes then to work at United Shoe. But he hasa no brains. He drinka much. He losa his job on. " Now, he becomes de bum. His wife must leava him. He bega / de money. He drinka de poin alcohol, de the varnish, everything. metimes he sleepa by railroad. " Sure, he was a tougha guy. metimes he come and aska me for dime. One night he wasa almost ber. I talka to him. I tella him de good Lord can take away his bad habits, I showa to him how I has chang-ed and has eras-ed twenty-four sins. I maka picture for him of Jesus. I praya with him. "No, he did not geta de good life quick. But he begins to understand a little. His heart it is touch-ed. " Bye and bye he listens to me me more. He stopa drinking. He getta job. De Lord shaka his heart. He is chang-ed man. The Lord has cleans-ed his ul. " No you see, Mr. Lovett, you has gota de good chance. You can cura de bad habits al, if you lova de Lord much and hava de will. [?] Interview with Vito Cacciola

By Merton R. Lovett

. . . (from memory) " Why do I ruba these white shoes with de sandpaper? I doa what you call, breaka de grain. Mr Lovett. Then I will puta on black stain. I will maka de shoes black and sparkling. " Often de white shoes geta il-ed that they must be black-ed. White is only beautiful when it is pure and fresha. [?] " White shoes is lika de good heart. They must be watch-ed with care. The pure heart too must be keep-ed from stain of sin. Peoples that

Library of Congress

breaka de commandments hava hearts which need to be cleans-ed by power of Jesus. “ It is true that I am de philopher. I thinka that whata peoples do and de purpose what they have is worth de study. We can learna much from understanding what men and women do and thinka. “ “ In English you calla de heart de ul. De shoes have different les. De are mucha like de men and women. See this a very fine le, good leather. Dey name it “Rock Oak.” It costa me forty five cents. It's clean and strong lika de ul of an honest man. But here's a cheap le for [a?] low price. See the scratches and de brand. It's weak and wears out quick like de ul of liar. And de uls of bad peoples have brands, the Devil's brands. [?] [?] 2 “ I believea most people good. Are we not all the children of God? But the Lord hava me very bad ns. Now I watcha dem close befor I trusta them. [?] “Once I think everybody good. I got dissapoint. [continue p27?] “Yes, dissalussioned, that's it.